

David Agonistes (David, the Champion) I Samuel 30:6

preached @ Hawkwood Baptist Church
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Intro.

When it came to choosing a sermon topic for this morning, I found myself in an awkward position. First, I might as well tell you that we have two amazing guest speakers lined up for the next two Sundays. Ordinarily we wouldn't do that, but these are people I really want you to hear, and it turns out these are the Sundays we can get them.

Next Sunday we have one of our own missionaries (a missionary partially supported by HBC), Dr. Julie Stone, who practices medicine in the Baptist hospital in Bango, Cameroon and teaches at the medical school. I met her in Cameroon, but she has never had an opportunity to share her work with us in the ten years plus I've been around. So that's next Sunday, Feb. 26th.

The following Sunday, Mar. 5th, we are privileged to have Walt Heyer speaking in both our services. Walt is a formerly transgendered person who came back to the Lord and back to living as the man God made him to be. Now he is a sought-after speaker who seeks to help others who regret gender change. We need Walt to help us understand how to preach the unchanging gospel more effectively in this Bill 10 world we're living in.

But these guest speakers put me in a bit of a dilemma. I had intended to get back to I Corinthians after we finished the January series on the Church covenant, but last week, as you will remember, it became necessary to speak about elders, and, what with a couple of guest speakers lined up, I didn't really want to pop into I Corinthians for this one Sunday, then wait three weeks to revisit the book.

As things stand now it appears we'll get back to Corinth on the second Sunday in March. And that means we've got a Sunday with nothing in particular to preach about. It isn't Christmas or Easter, and after I looked it up it appears Family Day is more about Alberta politics than the Bible, so that's out. I started to preach about President's day, but then I remembered I'm not an American anymore. So I did what all Christians do after they've exhausted every other resource. I prayed about it, and the Lord directed my heart back to a favourite verse, I Samuel 30:6.

To get to I Samuel 6, let's start with Paul's second letter to Timothy.

II Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, *for training in righteousness*, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

It's that last phrase in verse 16 that speaks to us today. We're going to the Old Testament (the Scripture Paul had in mind), for training in how to live rightly before God.

Two truths about David. (1) Until he messed himself up with the Bathsheba affair, no man on earth displayed a heart more in tune with God. It seems to me that a careful study of the life of David is one of the best ways in the world for us to learn how to live a Christ-honouring life. (2) After his horrible sin with Bathsheba, no man on earth has given us a better example of a life lived in repentance. But that's a story for another day. Join me now in examining one event from David's life as a way for each

of us to learn how to live a life that has God's approval.

This is a simple story, yet I promise that if you get hold of the single principle at its heart it will not only change your life forever, it will make it possible for you to live a life that has God's approval, no matter what comes against you. You may think that's an impossible claim, but stick with me and see if it doesn't prove true.

David's life in context

- Today's story takes place just before David finally became king of Judah. He was probably 29 years old. By this point David had been running and hiding from King Saul for about 10 years, just trying to stay alive.
- During that period of time some 600 men had gathered under his leadership. These men had been made outcasts of Israel for one reason or another, and some had been truly bad men. In fact it was a sign of David's amazing qualities as a man under God that he could command their respect and influence these outlaws to become great men themselves.
- Here's the thing. Throughout the ten years of his fugitive life, literally hiding in caves and sleeping outdoors, David had consistently sought to demonstrate to Saul that he loved him and had no intention to kill him. But for his pains all the thanks he got were new campaigns against him.
- Finally the strain got to David and he decided to lead his men, his two wives, and all their children to live with the Philistines, Israel's most implacable enemies.

I Samuel 27:1 David said to himself, "One of these days I'll be swept away by Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape immediately to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will stop searching for me everywhere in Israel, and I'll escape from him." 2 So David set out with his 600 men and went to Achish son of Maach, the king of Gath. 3 David and his men stayed with Achish in Gath. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, Nabal's widow. 4 When it was reported to Saul that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him.

- Achish gave David and his men the town of Ziklag to live in as their own, and he and David became friends. But of course people have to eat, so every day David and his men would go out raiding amongst Israel's covenant enemies, the Amalekites, a people of whom God had said in Deuteronomy 25:17-19 that Israel was to "blot out their memory" because of the evil things they'd done to God's people while they were journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land.
- Life rocked along for about a year-and-a-half, until one day Achish called upon David and asked him to go on a military campaign with him against King Saul and the Israelites. David agreed, but you can imagine he was praying like crazy for God to interfere because he really wanted to be king of Israel, not an ally of Israel's enemies. Fortunately, the other Philistine leaders told Achish to send David home because they didn't trust him. They thought that in the midst of battle David and his men might turn on them and help Saul defeat them. Who knows? They might actually have done that very thing.

David's life in crisis

- So David and his men turned around and arrived back in Ziklag three days after they left, only to find that the Amalekites had regrouped and attacked their village, burning it to the ground and

taking all the wives, the children, the livestock and everything else with them. Now we know differently, but David and his men had no hope that they were even alive. They wept—“till they had no more strength left to weep,” the Scripture says.

- Then they got mad. This was someone’s fault, they decided, and the only man to blame was David. In their bitterness they even talked about stoning him. David was a great warrior, but there were 600 of them, and he didn’t stand a chance. So the question for David was, what to do? Run? Deflect their anger onto someone else? Become bitter like Job’s wife and just curse God and die?
- David could have said, “God, you said I was supposed to be king. But instead you’ve turned me into a fugitive with a price on my head. And now my men and I have lost everything and these guys want to kill me. I hope they get it over with quickly. I’ve had it with you and the empty dreams you planted in my head!”
- You know that is *not* what David did. What he did was “find strength in the Lord his God.” (today’s text) And having found that strength, David then called for the High Priest and his ephod in order to seek the face of God and ask Him what to do. How God spoke to David through the ephod we don’t know. But through it God would often speak in complete sentences, and in this case God told David to go after the Amalekites and rescue their people. And that, of course, is exactly what David did, along with his men, of course.

Facing life like David

- But now let’s go back and examine this moment in David’s life with a view toward learning to live the very same way. Remember, we’re supposed to be learning how to live a life that pleases God, that has His approval.
 1. At the moment of David’s greatest trial he sought God, not some other source of wisdom or guidance. By way of contrast, as David sought God in his extreme need, so Saul, also in extreme need, was at almost the same moment consulting with a witch! (Remember Saul? He was getting set to fight the same Philistines that David had been with three days earlier. See I Sam. 28) It’s interesting to note, then, that David got guidance, while all Saul got was a curse and a promise that he and his sons would die the next day.
 2. You will likely not seek God in moments of extreme need unless you have been in the habit of seeking Him during better moments. Think of someone you barely know. You’re friendly enough, but if you have to make an emergency run to the hospital, would you call them? You might, but not without first calling your friends. But really, isn’t the order first family, then close friends, then friends further out, and so on, with near strangers at the bottom of the list? The issue, then, is how to be part of God’s family, so that in times of trouble you can be comfortable making that call.
 3. Do you have a personal relationship with God? I’m not asking if you think you will go to heaven. I’m asking, “Do you have a personal relationship with God? Is He someone you call on? Talk to? Listen to? Notice David didn’t just ask God for guidance. He waited for God to speak, to guide Him. And do you think that God is less able to speak to His children today than then? To suggest as much would border on blasphemy.

Rom. 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” 16 The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children, 17 and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Have you received the Spirit of adoption? Does the Spirit testify to your spirit that you are God's child? Is "Abba, Father" as natural in your heart and mouth as a baby's cry after it is born?

Digging deeper into Scripture

4. At first the idea of David finding strength in the Lord could make you think he just got lucky. "David *found* strength" our translation says. Such language could make it seem like when a starving man suddenly finds a hundred dollar bill lying on the sidewalk. Sheer luck. But that is not what this passage says. In the original language the verb stem makes it clear that David self-consciously looked to God! In other words, he kept his natural inclinations and his emotions under control and turned to God, the only true friend he had at that moment.

You know what I'm talking about. The natural bent of the soul is toward keeping God at arms' length. Ironically, this is especially true in the bad times, in the difficulties of life. Satan's ally, our old fleshly nature, is just looking for a chance to say, "See, I always knew God was going to let us down!"

The trick is in the flesh's use of the personal pronoun — "let *us* down." If you are a new person in Christ you know not to identify with the flesh, but only with God's Holy Spirit. There must be no "we" with whatever in us wants to deny God. We know that "walking in the Spirit means we do not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

5. One last thing. It is a rare thing indeed for a person to turn to God in crisis if they haven't learned to turn to God in the midst of the steady grind of life. In some ways the harder thing for David was to stay true to God during his ten years as a fugitive. Yet this is the most important thing you can do, to learn to praise God while life grinds on. The secret to David's success was that he never succumbed to the temptation to say, "Why is this happening to me?" Instead, he figured out how to praise God in all weathers, and in so doing brought an entire nation to faith.

Psalm 63

A Davidic psalm. When he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 God, You are my God; I eagerly seek You.
I thirst for You;
my body faints for You
in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.
- 2 So I gaze on You in the sanctuary
to see Your strength and Your glory.
- 3 My lips will glorify You
because Your faithful love is better than life.
- 4 So I will praise You as long as I live;
at Your name, I will lift up my hands.
- 5 You satisfy me as with rich food;[a]
my mouth will praise You with joyful lips.
- 6 When I think of You as I lie on my bed,
I meditate on You during the night watches
- 7 because You are my helper;
I will rejoice in the shadow of Your wings.
- 8 I follow close to You;
Your right hand holds on to me.